

Chairman's Report 2022

The disruption caused by Covid continued in 2021 and 2022. Our meeting in May 2021 was the last we were permitted to call using Zoom. Because the government did not renew the regulations allowing for remote meetings, the next meeting was held in July when the Hall re-opened. The meeting in January was cancelled due to the uncertainty of a renewed wave of Covid. And the planned Playday for August last year was cancelled.

However, even with the problems caused by restrictions, the year has been a very productive one for Ilton.

In July the perimeter path around the Playing Field was finished and benches and picnic tables were installed. At the end of last year a volunteer Working Group was set up to help maintain the Playing Field. More trees were planted including a large oak tree a few weeks ago to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. A new dog waste bin was installed at the bottom of the Field near the path from the new houses and the Community Gardens were fenced. The football pitch was white lined; we are still hoping for someone to come forward to set up and run football on the new pitch.

Grass cutting and strimming has continued to be done by our own team of volunteers. New grass cutting equipment was bought and a new container was bought and fitted out. The grass cutting volunteers all received their formal training. The proposed skate park received planning consent and the task now ahead is to source funding to make the dream of a skate park come true.

Work was carried out on the trees in the Churchyard and the Cemetery. The Cemetery fees were revised to bring them into line with Ilminster's. In the Play Park the newly installed fencing was badly vandalised and much of it had to be replaced. The Ranger continues to come twice a month to maintain parts of the village not covered by the volunteers.

A war memorial in the form of a beautiful carved wooden cross was commissioned from Ben Harmes of Ilminster and set up on the Village Green in time for Remembrance Day in November, together with soldier silhouettes and name plaques to remember the fallen from Ilton. Sadly Ben Harmes died in December not long after finishing the cross. A very well attended open air service was held, attended by representatives from the armed forces including the Americans who were stationed at Merryfield during the War.

The Christmas Sleigh was brought out again this year with music and Santa and sweets for the children. Also at the end of last year the meeting time was changed from 7.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

A new website was set up to ensure we can comply with our legal obligations and to make information available to residents as easily as possible. A new Facebook page has been set up to post relevant information and news of a more immediate nature and to bring the community together. A walking group has also been set up to ensure the footpaths are regularly walked and maintained. The flower trough has continued to be maintained and is looking lovely.

At the end of last year our long serving Clerk Sue Morley decided to retire and a recruitment drive took place during the new year at the end of which our new Clerk Kim Larsson was appointed. Special thanks must go to Elaine Simpson who advised on the appointment process and who conducted the interviews.

The new single unitary authority for Somerset will be called Somerset Council, based in Taunton. The number of councillors will be cut by two thirds. Elections were held for the new Council on 5th May and our councillors are Adam Dance and Jo Roundell Greene. The new Council will run alongside the existing District Councils for a year, after which they will be dissolved in 2023 leaving just the one unitary Somerset Council.

During the year a number of Parish Councillors resigned and I would like to thank the following for their work during the time they spent on the Parish Council: Jacqueline Bennett, Jan Easterbrook, Searon Hill, Dan Mico and Will Bragg. A number of people joined the Council being: Nick Matravers, Andrew Pidgeon, Andrew Gordon and Elaine Simpson. I would like to thank them all for the invaluable contribution they have already made to the work in Ilton. And of course I do not want to forget to thank all existing councillors who continue to work tirelessly for Ilton and all the volunteers, both on the Field Working Group as well as elsewhere. There is still one vacancy on the Parish Council and all current councillors were elected unopposed at the recent election.

Ian Sherwood May 2022